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ABSTRACT

In order to gain a greater understanding of vocational teachers' use of and attitudes toward the college library, a questionnaire was administered to 138 full- and part-time vocational instructors at Tarrant County Junior College (TCJC), Texas. Study results indicate that vocational teachers at TCJC utilized printed materials in almost 75% of their courses. However, library-owned resources were used much less extensively than materials owned by the departments and instructors, even when the library holdings included the same books and periodicals. Teachers with less than one year's experience were the greatest users of eight of 11 types of instructional resources, utilizing departmentally and personally owned books in almost 80% of their classes. Teachers who were classified as library-users believed that students should read more than textbook assignments, that library materials help keep students abreast of developments in their field, and that library use develops critical thinking skills and improves grades. They were not satisfied with the library collection, class size, or that students need to use the library as part of their college education. Non-library-users indicated that they did not feel that the library needed to be used in skill development courses and that library materials were not easily accessible to the classroom. (AYC)

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VOCATIONAL TEACHERS AND THE COLLEGE LIBRARY

by

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ABSTRACT

A library use and attitudinal survey was conducted involving 138 community junior college vocational teachers, a group often overlooked in typical user studies. Results indicate that vocational-technical teachers utilize a wide variety of library-type resources but proximity to the classroom, laboratory or shop may be the key to use!

Considering the principal types of programs offered at the comprehensive community junior college, vocational education, often referred to as vocational-technical or occupational education, has played an increasingly important role in the development of two-year colleges during the past forty years. As Cohen observes, of the three community junior college functions -- vocational, transfer, and general education, the "vocational receives the most attention from administrators . . . and is the outstanding characteristic of the community college in its role of higher education."[1] The relative importance of vocational-technical education may also be noted in recent estimates that "at least half and perhaps 70 percent of the junior college freshmen will never matriculate as juniors in a baccalaureate degree program" and that "over 50 percent of the junior college students will eventually find their life careers in fields for which a two-year program or semi-professional and technical-vocational education is the optimal preparation."[2] These statistics are reflected in many community junior college enrollments where often times, the vocational-technical students comprise over half of the entire student body.

The diversity of the students and the broad range of curricular programs in vocational-technical and other areas present a formidable challenge to the community junior college library. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of the college library is greatly determined by the extent of faculty utilization of the library and their attitudes toward the library. Indeed, "the chief incentive students have to use the library is derived from the teaching staff. Teachers with a strong recognition of the value of the

library will be more likely to transmit this attitude to the student than the teacher who does not recognize value."[3]

An overriding problem for librarians trying to meet the needs of vocational-technical teachers is that, other than intuition or observation, they simply do not know the patterns of use of the library by these teachers and their attitudes toward library use by their students. Most studies of this nature have concentrated on the academic segment of the community junior college faculty and largely ignored the vocational-technical segment.

In order to gain a greater understanding of vocational-technical teachers and their relationship with the library, a comprehensive study was undertaken at Tarrant County Junior College (T.C.J.C.), South Campus. The population consisted of 138 full and part-time vocational-technical teachers. One of the major hypotheses tested was that when these teachers were grouped according to their length of time taught, they would differ significantly in their use of library-type resources and in their attitudes toward use of the T.C.J.C. Library. It was felt that teachers with more teaching experience would make greater use of such resources and have more positive attitudes toward the library than those with less teaching experience.

A self reporting questionnaire was used and the responses of the full and part-time teachers were compared and tested for significant differences.

METHODOLOGY

A search of the literature revealed no standardized survey instrument for measuring the use of library-type resources and attitudes toward the library. In constructing the questionnaire for the study, a check list of resources known to be widely available to community junior college

vocational-technical teachers was developed. Library-type resources were defined as those printed materials owned by the library and those owned by the teachers and departments that were used in the classroom, laboratory, or shop as an instructional resource. The following method was employed in establishing the amount of use. First the total number of courses taught by the teachers in each classification (1 year experience, 2-5 years, and 6 or more years) was computed. This figure thus represented the total number of courses in which a library—type resource could have been used by the teachers in each classification. (One year teachers taught 65 courses; 2-5 year teachers, 108 courses; and 6 or more year teachers, 109 courses, for a total of 281 courses.) The relative use of each kind of resource was then determined by dividing the total number of courses taught (or maximum possible use factor) into the total number of courses in which the respondant reported use of each kind of resource (actual use factor). A second section of the questionnaire called for responses to attitudinal statements concerned with use and non-use of the library.

RESULTS

Use of Library-type Resources

As Table I indicates, the vocational-technical teachers at T.C.J.C. utilized printed materials extensively in their courses. Departmentally and personally owned books were used as an instructional resource in almost three-fourths of their classes. Manufacturers' materials were also widely used as were association publications and personally owned journals. T.C.J.C. Library owned resources, however, were utilized much less extensively than those owned by the teachers and departments. In most cases, the T.C.J.C.

Library owned many of the same books and subscribed to most of the same journals as the teachers and the departments.

Surprisingly, vocational-technical teachers relied far less on textbooks, manuals or guides than their academic counterparts whose " . . . excessive reliance on the lecture method; prescribed amounts of materials to be covered in a greater period; primarily in textbooks . . ."[4] are listed among the causes for the high attrition rates in community junior colleges.

INSERT TABLE I

When the teachers were grouped according to the number of years taught at T.C.J.C. (see Table II) they differed significantly in only two resources, departmentally owned books and personally owned journals. Perhaps the most unexpected finding of this part of the study was that teachers with the least experience that is, one year or less, were the greatest users of eight of the eleven resources and were equal in use to the highest users in two resources. In only one resource, government publications, was the greatest use recorded by teachers with six or more years.

Teachers with one year or less experience utilized departmentally and personally owned books as an instructional resource in at least eighty percent of their classes. They also used manufacturers' literature, personally owned journals, association publications, and programmed or individualized materials in over half of their courses. In comparing this group's response to that of the total population's response as shown in Table I, they recorded a higher percentage of use than the total population in all but four of the resources.

INSERT TABLE II

Teachers with the most experience recorded the highest use of only one resource, government publications. They recorded a higher usage than the total population in personally owned journals, association publications, T.C.J.C. Library materials, departmentally owned journals, government publications, textook, manuals or guides.

The null hypothesis for this section of the study stated that when teachers were classified according to the length of time taught there would be no significant differences in their use of the library-type resources. The hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for departmental books and personally owned journals.

Attitudes of Library Users

The second section of the study called for the grouping of teachers according to their use of the T.C.J.C. Library, that is, those who indicated that they used Library materials or "library-users" and those who did not or "non-library users."

As shown in Table III, teachers identified as library-users tended to closely agree to only four of the attitudinal statements: (1) students should read more than textbook assignments, (2) use of library materials helps students keep abreast of new developments in their field, (3) library assignments help students develop critical thinking, and (4) use of library materials help students make better grades. They differed sharply, however, in their responses to four statements: (1) the library collection is adequate for my students needs, (2) use of library materials now is the

best preparation for continuing education later on the job, (3) classes are small enough to administer library assignments and (4) students need to use the library as part of their college education.

INSERT TABLE III

When the instructors with 1 year or less teaching experience and those with 2-5 years experience were considered collectively, a definite pattern of response to the attitudinal statements emerged. That is, instructors in these categories recorded the highest affirmative response to all attitudinal statements except one.

Somewhat surprisingly, teachers with more experience recorded the lowest affirmative responses to seven of the eleven attitudinal statements.

Attitudes of Non-Library Users

Perhaps more important than the reasons vocational-technical teachers do use the library are the reasons they do not. When the instructors who were identified as non-library users were asked to select the reasons which reflected their reasons for not using the library, there was little agreement in their responses (see Table IV). The only close agreement occurred in their responses to the statement, my courses predominately involve skill development, and materials must be readily accessible to the classroom, laboratory or shop.

When the instructors with 1 year or less teaching experience and those with 2-5 years experience were considered collectively, a pattern of

response to the attitudinal statements was evident. That is, instructors in these two categories recorded the highest affirmative responses to all attitudinal statements except one.

INSERT TABLE IV

Instructors with more teaching experience appeared to be less concerned with the library as an institution. They recorded the lowest responses to: (1) the library collection is inadequate, (2) my students do not feel comfortable or at home in the library, (3) I do not feel that I know enough about the library and therefore feel that I can not make assignments in the library, and (4) my own experiences with libraries have left me with a bad impression of libraries.

Teachers with less experience felt that the reasons they did not use the T.C.J.C. Library revolved around student inadequacies: poor motivation, lack of time to complete assignments, and the inability of students to use the library.

When reviewing the reasons vocational-technical teachers did not use the library, the overwhelming majority felt that their classes predominately involved skill development and materials must be readily accessible to the classroom, laboratory or shop.

Conclusions

The hypothesis for this study stated that there would be no significant differences among teachers classified according to their teaching experience in their use of library-type resources and in their attitudes toward library use. The hypothesis was accepted for the majority of questions and length of time taught does not appear to be a significant factor in library use or attitudes. There were, however, significant implications for librarians desiring to serve this group:

1. Vocational-technical teachers make extensive use of a wide variety of library-type resources in their courses. Many of these resources do not represent the types of traditional materials discussed in library science courses or reviewed in the literature. Often manufacturers' manuals and literature or association publications are the most up to date or are the only source of information on a technical subject. Librarians must become familiar with and systematically acquire these resources with the same zeal that they acquire conventional books and periodicals.

2. Departmentally and personally owned library-type resources were used far more extensively than T.C.J.C. Library owned resources even when most of these same resources were located in the library or could have been purchased by the library. This trend suggests for some, a vocational-technical branch located near teaching stations may be desirable. A sixty dollar technical manual that must be used

in conjunction with a piece of machinery does little good resting snugly in the stacks in the main library several blocks across the campus.

3. Many vocational-technical teachers have a very positive attitude concerning their student's use of library resources. They feel that use of the library is part of a college education and serves as a vital source of instruction. Teachers with less experience appear to be somewhat stronger in their admiration which suggests that this group should receive particular attention from librarians.
4. Of those teachers who did not use the library, by far the strongest reason was the necessity of having library-type materials near the teaching station. This finding also supports the consideration of a vocational-technical branch library.

Vocational-technical teachers and students represent for many community junior colleges and some universities an untapped source of library users. That their needs are not being met may be due to the fact that most professional librarians are university trained and identify more readily with academics than vocationalists. The library requirements of this group may require a complete restructuring of thought by librarians where acquisition and location of materials are concerned. When vocational-technical enrollments and faculty size approach and in some cases surpass fifty percent of the college community, librarians can no longer afford such benign neglect.

TABLE I

USE OF LIBRARY-TYPE RESOURCES BY TOTAL POPULATION
OF VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL INSTRUCTORS

Rank	Library-type Resource	Number of Courses Taught	Number of Courses in which Resource Used	Per Cent
1	Departmentally owned books	281	201	73
2	Personally owned books	281	201	72
3	Manufacturers' literature other than service manuals	281	178	63
4	Personally owned journals	281	156	56
5	Manufacturers' service manuals	281	145	52
6	Association publications	281	141	50
7	Programmed or individualized materials	281	127	45
8	T.C.J.C. Library printed materials	281	105	37
9	Departmentally owned journals	281	92	33
10	Government publications	281	80	28
11	Textbooks, manuals, or guides	281	51	18

TABLE II

USE OF LIBRARY-TYPE RESOURCES BY INSTRUCTORS
CLASSIFIED BY LENGTH OF TIME TAUGHT

	Length of Time Taught	1 year		2-5 years		6 or more years		X^2
	Number of Courses Taught	64		108		109		
	Number of Courses Resource Used and Percentage of Use	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	Departmentally owned books	54	85	74	69	77	71	8.33
2	Personally owned books	51	80	76	71	74	68	2.91
3	Manufacturers' literature other than service manuals	44	69	60	56	74	68	4.93
4	Personally owned journals	44	69	44	41	68	61	14.86
5	Manufacturers' service manuals	37	58	56	52	52	48	2.01
6	Association publications	35	55	50	47	56	51	.99
7	Programmed or individualized materials	35	55	54	51	47	43	2.26
8	T.C.J.C. Library printed materials	26	41	38	36	41	38	.37
9	Departmentally owned journals	23	36	28	26	38	36	2.18
10	Government publications	17	27	26	24	37	34	2.59
11	Textbooks, manuals, or guides	13	20	16	15	22	20	1.11

(Critical value for accepting the null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance with 2 d.f. is 5.99.)

TABLE III

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES TO ATTITUDINAL STATEMENTS REGARDING LIBRARY USE BY TEACHERS CLASSIFIED BY LENGTH OF TIME TAUGHT

	Length of Time Taught	1 year	3-5 years	6 or more years	X^2
	Number of Instructors	15	20	24	
1	Students need to use the library as part of their college education	100%	90%	63%	21.48
2	Students should read more than textbook assignments	73%	75%	69%	1.71
3	Use of library materials helps broaden students overall education	100%	95%	92%	7.88
4	Use of library materials helps students keep abreast of new developments in their field	87%	90%	88%	0.45
5	Use of library materials now is best preparation for continuing education later on job	100%	85%	79%	22.16
6	Library materials expand my course content	73%	90%	79%	9.53
7	Library assignments help students develop critical thinking	80%	75%	79%	0.82
8	Class is small enough to administer library assignments	80%	90%	63%	21.48
9	Use of library materials helps students make better grades	73%	75%	69%	1.71
10	I use the library and therefore feel that my students should use it	73%	60%	46%	15.15
11	The library collection is adequate for my students needs	47%	70%	33%	29.92

(Critical value for accepting the null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance with 2 d.f. is 5.99.)

TABLE IV

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES TO ATTITUDINAL STATEMENTS REGARDING NON-USE OF LIBRARY BY TEACHERS CLASSIFIED BY LENGTH OF TIME TAUGHT

	Length of Time Taught	1 year	2-5 years	6 or more years	x^2
	Number of Instructors	16	21	20	
1	My courses predominately involve skill development, materials must be readily accessible to the classroom, lab or shop	81%	81%	90%	4.02
2	My courses do not require the use of library materials	50%	81%	70%	22.34
3	My courses have too much to cover as it is	31%	48%	25%	12.57
4	My students do not have time to complete library assignments	38%	33%	20%	8.17
5	The library collection is inadequate	25%	33%	20%	4.47
6	The majority of my students can not use the library adequately	13%	33%	15%	14.98
7	My students are not motivated sufficiently to complete library assignments	25%	24%	10%	8.90
8	My students can not read well enough to complete library assignments	13%	29%	0%	35.05
9	My students do not feel comfortable in the library	6%	19%	5%	13.56
10	I do not feel I know enough about the library and therefore feel that I can not make assignments in the library	19%	10%	0%	20.69
11	My own experiences with libraries have left me with a bad impression of libraries	6%	5%	5%	0.13
12	My classes are too large, I can not administer library assignments	13%	0%	0%	27.18

(Critical value for accepting the hypothesis at the .05 level of significance with 2 d.f. is 5.99.)

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